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PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE
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Agenda item 2(b)

PREPARATIONS FOR THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT ON THE BASIS OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 44/228 AND TAKING INTO ACCOUNT OTHER RELEVANT GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTIONS: RECENT ACTIONS OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND OTHER BODIES OF RELEVANCE TO THE PREPARATORY PROCESS

Report of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific on the Ministerial-level Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific

The present report was prepared by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) after a meeting held at Bangkok from 15 to 16 October 1990. It is the contribution of the ESCAP region to the preparatory process for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and is submitted to the Preparatory Committee in accordance with General Assembly resolution 44/228.

CONTENTS

		Page
I.	ORGANIZATION OF THE SESSION	1
	A. Attendance	1
	B. Royal audience	2
II.	OPENING OF THE CONFERENCE	2
	A. Opening statement	2
	B. Inaugural address	3
	C. Election of officers	7
	D. Adoption of the agenda	7
III.	POLICIES AND PERSPECTIVES OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC: ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES IN THE 1990s	8
IV.	REPORT OF THE PREPARATORY MEETING OF SENIOR OFFICIALS	15
V.	CONSIDERATION OF A MINISTERIAL DECLARATION ON ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC	16
VI.	OTHER MATTERS	16
VII.	ADOPTION OF THE REPORT	16

ANNEXES

I. Report of the Preparatory Meeting of Senior Officials

II. Ministerial Declaration on Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific

III. List of documents

I. ORGANIZATION OF THE SESSION

1. The Ministerial-level Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific was convened at Bangkok from 15 to 16 October 1990.

A. Attendance

2. The Conference was attended by ministers and representatives of the following members and associate members of ESCAP: Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, China, Fiji, France, India, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Samoa, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Tonga, Tuvalu, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Vanuatu, Viet Nam, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Republic of Marshall Islands and Republic of Palau.

3. Representatives of the following countries attended as observers: Brazil, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Finland, Germany, Israel, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey.

4. The following United Nations bodies, specialized agencies and intergovernmental organizations were represented: United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) (UNCHS), United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations (UNCTC), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), International Labour Organisation (ILO), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), World Health Organization (WHO), World Bank, World Meteorological Organization (WMO), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee (AALCC), Asian Development Bank (ADB), Commission of the European Communities (CEC), Committee for Co-ordination of Joint Prospecting for Mineral Resources in Asian Offshore Areas (CCOP), International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), South Asian Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP) and South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP).

5. The following non-governmental organizations and other organizations were also represented: Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC), Asian Wetland Bureau (AWB), Centre for Our Common Future, Citizen Alliance Saving Atmosphere, Forum of Environmental Journalists of India (FEJI), Greenpeace Australia, International Union for Conservation of Nature and Resources (IUCN), World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation, International Jute Organization (IJO), Research and Development Institute, Society for International Development (SID), the Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI) and the NGO/Media Symposium on Communication for Environment organized in conjunction with the Conference.

B. Royal audience

6. The Conference expressed its deep gratitude to His Majesty the King of Thailand for graciously granting an audience to the heads of delegations and for providing the guiding inspiration for the preservation of the environment.

II. OPENING OF THE CONFERENCE

A. Opening statement

7. The Executive Secretary of ESCAP delivered the opening statement mentioning that the presence of the Prime Minister, Ministers and senior representatives of members and associate members clearly indicated the importance given to environment and development issues by the Governments of the region. The Executive Secretary expressed his deep gratitude to His Excellency General Chatichai Choonhavan, Prime Minister of Thailand, for inaugurating the Conference and expressed appreciation to H.E. Mr. Prachuab Chaiyasan, Minister of Science, Technology and Energy of Thailand, for his full support in the preparations for the Conference.

8. The Executive Secretary also expressed his thanks to UNDP for its support and role as co-sponsor, UNEP, ADB and the Governments of Australia, France, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, the USSR and Sweden for their co-operation and valuable technical and financial contributions. He also informed the Conference of the inspiring message to the Conference from Mrs. Gro Harlem Brundtland, former Prime Minister of Norway and Chairperson of the World Commission on Environment and Development.

9. The Executive Secretary recalled that the first regional Ministerial-level Conference on the Environment in Asia, held at Bangkok in 1985, had contributed to increased environmental awareness and action in the region, which had since embarked on the path of sustainable development. However, poverty remained a pervasive problem, being both a cause and a consequence of environmental degradation in the Asian and Pacific region. Thus the urgent task of the present Conference was to develop a coherent and integrated agenda for action towards environmentally sound and sustainable development for the region.

10. Following this, the Executive Secretary read to the Conference the message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who extended his warm greetings to the delegations and pointed out that the Conference was an example of heightened international collaboration between the organizers, co-sponsors and Governments in response to Commission resolution 267 (XLIV). The message conveyed was that the Conference was of special significance in view of the diversity of the region, where almost 800 million people were still living in absolute poverty. There was an urgent need to promote environmentally sound and sustainable development, including, in particular, alleviating poverty and achieving a fairer distribution of the benefits of economic progress.

B. Inaugural address

11. His Excellency General Chatichai Choonhavan, Prime Minister of Thailand, warmly welcomed the participants and stated that Thailand placed great value on the Conference, convened in a timely manner, to co-ordinate a common strategy to meet the global environmental challenge. He emphasized the need for Thailand to confront its status as a "front-line state" in the global struggle between national development and environmental preservation, especially in view of the fact that the country had excelled in its development at considerable expense to the environment.

12. The Prime Minister expressed support for intensified efforts towards effective implementation of measures at the regional level to resolve rationally the conflict between development and environmental preservation and to achieve a developmental path that was both sustainable and beneficial. In that regard, the Prime Minister expressed his wish that deliberations should be successful and declared the Conference open.

13. In his statement on behalf of the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, the Assistant Administrator and Regional Director, Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, UNDP, informed the Conference of the newly initiated Sustainable Development Network of UNDP and recalled that all the UNDP Field Offices served as focal points to assist Governments in promoting and managing programmes for environmentally sound and sustainable development.

14. He added that UNDP took into consideration environmental constraints and opportunities at all stages of its programme and project cycles. To that end, it had prepared a set of environmental management guidelines for all its staff, and those would be shared with the Government partners as well. More than 500 environmental projects were under way world-wide, supported with UNDP inputs totalling over $US 500 million. They ranged from environmental sector reviews to conservation of energy and protection of marine resources. More than 200 of those projects were active in the Asian and Pacific region.

15. He mentioned that UNDP had proposed the Asia Pacific 2000 initiative. The idea stemmed from the conviction that the solution to the region's urban environmental problems could best be found from within the region.

16. In his opening statement, the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme stated that people everywhere wanted sharply delineated actions to halt natural resource destruction and pollution, accelerate equitable economic growth, and pave the way for environmentally sound and sustainable development. They were expecting no less than that from the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

17. He added that clearly, business as usual could not continue. Meaningful action began with the recognition that economic growth was wholly dependent on the health of the planetary biosphere. Yet for decades economic growth had been fuelled by short-sighted ecological deficit financing, by resource gluttony and skyrocketing pollution. For decades, precious resources had been mined as if they were limitless; pollution ignored as an extraneous factor; and economic indicators followed despite their dismal failure to tell the ecological truth about economic development.

18. Finally, he mentioned that Governments needed to strengthen comprehensive environmental regulations and enforcement policies. Environment departments needed to be bolstered, and a multisectoral approach to environment action pursued. Finance, trade, energy and other key departments needed to integrate ecological factors into each stage of project design and execution. Public policies affecting investment, from tax rebates to subsidies and incentives, should be reformed to promote environmental protection as well as economic growth. Innovative revenue-generating mechanisms, including user's fees, should be considered as a viable means to finance greater conservation and environmental action, while simultaneously providing market disincentives to destructive practices.

19. In her statement, the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund informed the Conference that global population stood at approximately 5.24 billion persons and by the year 2000 that total would be over 6.2 billion people. That latest estimate was higher by 129 million than the projection made in 1984. Over 94 per cent of the projected increase during the next development decade, close to one billion people, would take place in the developing world - the countries least able to cope with the resource and environmental consequences of such rapid population growth - with their needs for health care, food, education, housing, and jobs.

20. She added that in Asia, as in developing countries in general, the combination of poverty and population growth among the "bottom billion" was damaging the environment in several of the most sensitive areas, most notably deforestation and land degradation. Developing countries made a difference by their sheer numbers. Four billion people, at whatever level of development, could scarcely fail to have a cumulative impact. Driven by economic necessity, the poor farmers and slum-dwellers were overtaxing and exploiting the fragile ecosystem and natural resource base surrounding them, in order merely to survive.

21. Finally, she stated that any environmental and development strategy, to be realistic and effective, should include policies in favour of slower, more balanced population growth, which in turn implied better maternal and child health care, available and efficient family planning services, and improvement in the status of women. There existed a high degree of agreement about goals for population policies, as illustrated in the Amsterdam Declaration, adopted by consensus by 79 countries in November 1989. Such policies had to give priority to the role of women since it was a key determinant of fertility, mortality, and most other aspects of family welfare and well-being.

22. In his statement, President of the Asian Development Bank stated that ADB recognized the resource constraints faced by its developing members and supported external assistance for environmental activities. In that respect, concessional forms of assistance, from both bilateral and multilateral sources, would provide important incentives. The Bank was prepared to commit its resources in such a way as to generate maximum environmental benefits. Although the Bank, with generous support from the Government of Japan, had established a modest Environment Fund for technical assistance projects, the need for environmental investment projects was yet to be addressed. How to fund environmental projects was a challenge for all. There were no easy solutions; innovative mechanisms, with key participation by donors, had to be explored.

23. The report of the Bank summarized the findings and major recommendations of country studies in Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea and Sri Lanka. With remarkable unanimity all those studies urged that "sustainability" be added to the list of high-level goals against which all development policies and projects were to be judged. The study also proposed an agenda for further action; the findings would be useful to Governments, donors and the environmental community at large.

24. Finally, he stated that the Bank recognized the importance and urgency of effective international co-operation to promote sustainable development and believed the present Conference was an excellent method of furthering this effort.

25. The Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development stated that awareness of the environmental problems and the responses to them had developed rapidly in the Asian and Pacific region as evidenced by the extensive activities being carried out by ESCAP including the convening of the current Conference; the adoption by the Heads of Governments of ASEAN (Association of South-East Asian Nations) countries at Manila in 1987 of principles and strategies for promoting sustainable development in the region and the Langkawi Declaration of Commonwealth Heads of Government in 1989. He believed that the Conference would provide important impetus and direction to preparations in the Asian and Pacific region for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development to be held at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in June 1992. He stressed that there was no region for which the results of the 1992 Conference would be more important than Asia and the Pacific.

26. Speaking on the evolution of the 1992 Conference, from its inception at the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held at Stockholm in 1972, the Secretary-General of UNCED stated that the 1992 Conference was to move the environment issue into the centre of the development agenda and of economic and sectoral policy and decision-making. Referring to the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, he stated that the continuation of large-scale and pervasive poverty was incompatible with environmental security as it was with principles of equity, justice and morality. He stressed that the Conference must produce a new political commitment to a global war on poverty as a central priority of the world community in the remainder of the 1990s and into the twenty-first century, and in that context, the Conference was expected to produce an agenda for a work programme of environment-development issues leading into the twenty-first century.

27. What was done or not done in those final years of the twentieth century would decisively determine the fate of the planet and the species in the twenty-first century and beyond. He stressed that environmental security required changes in development thinking and in the development process itself and that the preparations for the 1992 Conference had to provide the basis for a breakthrough. He closed his statement on a sober note, saying that should there be failure to make a breakthrough in 1992, the chances of doing so thereafter would be very small indeed.

C. Election of officers

28. H.E. Mr. Prachuab Chaiyasan, Minister for Science, Technology and Energy of the Royal Thai Government was elected Chairman of the Conference; H.E. Mr. Song Jian, State Councillor, Chairman of the National Environmental Protection Commission and Chairman of the State Science and Technology Commission of the Government of China, H.E. Mr. Neelamani Routray, Honourable Minister for Environment and Forests of the Government of India, H.E. Mr. Jim Yer Waim, Minister for Environment and Conservation of the Government of Papua New Guinea were elected Vice-Chairmen and Mr. C.J. van Tooren, Counsellor and Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to ESCAP was elected Rapporteur.

D. Adoption of the agenda

29. The Conference adopted the following agenda, as contained in document IHE/MCED/L.1:

1. Opening of the Conference.

2. Election of officers.

3. Adoption of the agenda.

4. Policies and perspectives of environmental management in Asia and the Pacific: environmental challenges in the 1990s.

5. Report of the Preparatory Meeting of Senior Officials on:

   (a) State of the environment in Asia and the Pacific;

   (b) Promotion of environmentally sound and sustainable development in the Asian and Pacific region;

   (c) Depletion of the ozone layer, greenhouse effect and related climatic changes, including rise in the sea level: their implications for the Asian and Pacific countries;

   (d) Regional co-operation in the field of the environment and development;

   (e) Regional strategy for environmentally sound and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific;

   (f) Regional input to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development 1992.

6. Consideration of a ministerial declaration on environmentally sound and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific.

7. Other matters.

8. Adoption of the report.

III. POLICIES AND PERSPECTIVES OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC: ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES IN THE 1990s

(Item 4 of the agenda)

30. In his keynote address, the Executive Director, United Nations Environment Programme, stated that in that region, as throughout the world, it was the poor who bore the brunt of environmental degradation. Two thirds of the region's population lived in rural areas. They increasingly faced a lack of safe drinking water, poor sanitation and eroding lands. They had little choice but to use forests for fuel and to turn to marginal lands to meet subsistence needs. That treadmill of rural poverty magnified soil erosion and desertification trends. Such problems could not be tackled through one-shot, isolated approaches. There was a need to reform timber concessions, instigate land tenure reforms that favoured small-scale land

holding, improve community-driven agricultural policies that relied on indigenous farming practices, and agro-forestry and integrated pest management strategies. Those and other problems demanded a united, co-ordinated approach by Governments at the regional level. But not all signs were negative and progress was under way.

31. He added that UNEP strongly supported progress made by the ESCAP secretariat in paving the way for a regional strategy towards environmentally sound and sustainable development. It was now urgent to build on past wisdom and present political momentum, and move to Rio de Janeiro for the 1992 Conference on Environment and Development with specific strategies translated into concrete, costed programmes aimed at achieving specific targets over specific time periods. Such strategies should provide a clear picture and a clear definition of who the actors would be, and how the implementation was going to be monitored. Brazil should put a seal on the concrete measures that had proven effective in the past to deal with environmental protection as a means to ensure sustainable development and economic growth. The present Ministerial-level Conference should play a critical role in bringing into sharp focus issues that should be addressed in Brazil. The Asian and Pacific region had to have a strong voice in setting the priorities during the preparatory process that would form the agenda for the Conference.

32. Policies to control greenhouse gas emissions would require a refocusing and redirection of energy use to increase process efficiency, and redirect investment to energy renewables such as solar, wind, tidal and geothermal sources. Strategies would also have to include substantial reforms in public policies of such energy-intensive sectors as transportation, agriculture and industry. But those were far from being punitive steps. Rather, comparative advantages would be gained by countries which took the lead role in developing new, energy-efficient technologies in 1992.

33. UNEP could no longer accept declarations and action plans which gave Governments loopholes to shirk their responsibilities. Already, 2000 international environmental agreements, multilateral and bilateral, were on the books. Yet the planet continued to be destroyed. The world public had had its fair share of manicured promises and wanted action and the correct implementation, of those treaties. UNEP was moving ahead with negotiations to build a global convention on biodiversity and to prepare a global convention on climate change. The target date was 1992.

34. Finally, he stated that as a scientist, he was baffled by the fact that conservation was still not regarded by economists as a form of economic development. The ecological crisis confirmed that markets were incapable by themselves of providing sufficient incentives to individuals, Governments and industry to protect the environment. That could not continue. There was an urgent need to reform economic measurements, and redefine incentives whereby the value of ecological resources from clean air to ancient forests was defined in unambiguous accounting terms. A further area that needed to be addressed was to what extent environment departments in the region had generated the necessary financial and other means for environmental action. In concluding, he reiterated the strong commitment of UNEP to work with ESCAP in helping with the implementation of what would be agreed upon during the Conference.

35. In his policy statement, the Executive Secretary of ESCAP stated that the environmental challenges in the 1990s were formidable and highly complex. Persistent mass poverty, dwindling natural resources, the threats of global warming and a depleted ozone layer, plus the unrelenting pollution of land, air and water posed a staggering array of environmental problems that urgently demanded suitable responses.

36. Meeting basic human needs was a suitable starting point for sustainable development where poverty was pervasive. But poverty and underdevelopment were also closely associated with many environmental problems. Those included denuded forests, soil degradation, lost productivity and disrupted ecosystems, stemming variously from the fuel demands of the poor, marginal farming practices or resulting from ignorance, disease or hunger. Policies to break that pernicious cycle should address root causes such as landlessness and inequitable access to natural resources, inadequate access to education, capital, technology or even health care, improper pricing of natural resources, deteriorating terms of trade and unfavourable trade policies, and heavy debt burdens. Rapid population growth should also be addressed in cases where excess worsened the poverty problem.

37. To help arrest their depletion, the region's natural resources needed to be clearly recognized as productive assets and their use taken into account accordingly in national income accounting procedures. The linkage between economic and environmental changes, as could be shown in separate resources accounts, would point the way toward the goal of quantifying what might be called sustainable GNP (gross national product), to assist in decision-making for development.

38. Industrialization was vital for continued growth in a region with a burgeoning population, limited land and a shrinking resource base. But policies encouraging industrial growth should also guard against its becoming unsustainable. Balancing energy needs with environmental concerns involved especially difficult policy decisions. Conservation and efficiency should be major aims in energy policies as well as technological advances to enable wider use of renewable energy sources. Institutional and legal reforms were also needed to underpin sustainable development, especially new legislation to combat the root causes of environmental despoliation.

39. Finally, he stated that countries in the region faced a decade of difficult decisions. The holistic concept of environmentally sound and sustainable development provided the soundest approach yet to development, and also reinforced the commitment to environmentalism. But the choices were hard ones, as with the demand for equity between present and future generations. Difficult too were the changes in the development process and in environmental perceptions and human behaviour and attitudes. Mustering strong commitment and large-scale participation by Governments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and the media would not be easy either, though regional activities could help substantially. The vital point to be kept in view was that the new environmental lexicon of sustainable development was not now, and should never be allowed to become, an empty slogan.

40. The heads of delegations of members and associate members of ESCAP delivered policy statements on the environmental challenges for the 1990s, the protection of the environment, and the promotion of environmentally sound and sustainable development.

41. The delegations expressed serious concern at the rapid deterioration of the environment as reflected in the report on the state of the environment in Asia and the Pacific 1990 and called for immediate steps to be taken to arrest the current trends.

42. The delegations described the state of their countries' environment and recent efforts for the protection of the environment, emphasizing the need to reorient economic development towards sustainability. Rapid population growth, the pervasive problems of poverty, depletion of natural resources and loss of biodiversity, land degradation, pollution of air and water, toxic and hazardous wastes, natural disasters, and the global environmental problems of the depletion of the stratospheric ozone layer and

climate change had been identified as the most urgent environment-development issues confronting the Asian and Pacific region and the world. There was general agreement on the need to address those issues at the national, regional, and global levels through the active pursuit of and the implementation of the principles of environmentally sound and sustainable development. Consequently, the Conference recognized that there was a need to enhance co-operation and to implement necessary measures to achieve that end.

43. Some delegations noted that the latest figures on deforestation were alarming and called on policy makers to pay more attention to the protection of forest resources, particularly at the national level, to the implementation of the ITTO Guidelines for Sustainable Development of Natural Tropical Forests and to continue work towards an international convention on global biological diversity. A suggestion was made relating to the establishment of a regional observatory on the environment to collect and disseminate environmental data on the South Pacific region.

44. On the global environmental problems of depletion of the ozone layer, climate change, and loss of biodiversity, many delegations called for concerted global action and co-operation to overcome those problems, including massive afforestation and protection of forests, transfer of appropriate technologies, training and institutional strengthening, participation in the work of the WMO/UNEP Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), as well as provision of financial resources similar to the ozone layer protection fund and the global environment facility.

45. The Conference supported ESCAP efforts on regional co-operation to improve the co-ordination of environment and development activities within the region; on development of a regional strategy for environmentally sound and sustainable development; and to prepare a comprehensive regional input as part of the preparatory process for the 1992 Conference.

46. Some delegations observed that some environmental issues were specific to certain parts of the region and encouraged ESCAP to continue to play an active role in strengthening subregional organizations and enhancing co-operation among them in support of regional programmes and activities. A suggestion was also made that ESCAP take the initiative in preparing guidelines for environmental ethics, in collaboration with other concerned agencies of the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and media groups.

47. The delegations generally stated that the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development and the UNEP Environmental perspective to the year 2000 and beyond had generated a new wave of environmentalism that pervaded the international community, a renewed vision of the unity of the world and the interdependence of the North and South. There was a new wave of hope and expectation that the persistent poverty of the South and the deteriorating conditions of the global environment were not beyond human solutions.

48. Several delegations pointed to the environmental impact of the functioning of the present international economic system and called for commodity agreements and innovative trade and investment regulations which would make ecological sustainability possible. Those would call for the strengthening of regional and international co-operation.

49. The delegations generally shared the view that the problems of the environment could not be isolated from national realities and international economic factors that continued to perpetuate poverty and that initiatives to overcome environmental problems would require concerted regional and international co-operation based on the principle of equitable sharing of responsibilities. Controlling environmental degradation was in conformity with the fundamental interests of developing countries and many delegations called on developed countries to assume major responsibility for the attainment of sustainable development.

50. Apart from the need for fundamental policy changes, the Conference recognized the magnitude of the financial resources that would be required for the active promotion of environmentally sound and sustainable development. On the one hand, the industrialized countries would have to supply their specific know-how together with the necessary financial resources, while on the other hand, they would have to reduce their disproportionate share of the utilization of natural resources to a globally sustainable level.

51. The Conference noted with appreciation efforts to institute financial mechanisms, such as the global environmental facility, and stated that such efforts were needed to support national and regional initiatives on environment and development. A suggestion was made that it was important to develop an international environment development fund to make available to countries funds for investment in environmental development and resource restoration, comparable to international investment in economic reconstruction and development. That could include "debt-for-sustainable

52. The delegations noted that new initiatives would require financial mechanisms, as well as the strengthening of institutional infrastructure at the national, subregional, regional, and global levels. The participation of Governments, international organizations, and, more significantly, of the non-governmental organizations and the public in general was crucial to the attainment of the objectives of sustainable development.

53. The Conference emphasized the importance of the Ministerial-level Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific and its crucial role in the region's preparations for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development to be held in Brazil in 1992. The Conference recognized the important role ESCAP would need to play in the preparations for the 1992 Conference, placing emphasis on the eradication of mass poverty as a cause of environmental degradation in developing countries, and urged the donor countries and agencies to provide the necessary financial assistance and technology transfer to developing countries, with special attention to countries which were expected to face serious difficulties in implementing programmes aimed at sustainable development and in the enforcement of recent international environmental agreements.

54. The Conference expressed its satisfaction that the draft Ministerial Declaration contained the principles of environmentally sound and sustainable development necessary to preserve the well-being of future generations. The Conference was gratified to note that the driving force in human society, the individual, had received due recognition of his right to be informed and involved in the process of sustainable development of the region. That issue was deemed important because without broad participation by the population, environmental policies were doomed to fail.

55. A suggestion was made that ESCAP should take the initiative to collect information on oriental customs and traditions relating to the environment to form a part of the regional input to the 1992 Conference.

56. While talking about a livable environment and keeping it intact for our children and grandchildren, one of the Chairmen of the NGO/Media Symposium referred to the three environments: the outer environment of land, sea and air; the outer environment of poverty; and the ethical and spiritual environmental values which were responsible for all our action and social behaviour. In that context, he referred to the Universal Code of Environment Conduct adopted by the Symposium, requesting it to be included

in the report of the meeting. That needed to be adapted and translated into the national context and to be internalized by citizens and communities. The code might appear naive and idealistic but it had more chance of success than the cleverness which had brought us to the current dilemma. The salient features of the 11-point code of conduct were: to inculcate a sense of unity between man and environment; economic and social justice for those most affected by environmental degradation; and full environmental accountability by all concerned. He also referred to the 15 recommendations of the Symposium, prominent among which were: promotion of environmental education in all schools and colleges, timely access to reliable environmental data, full integration of non-governmental and grassroots organizations into the development process, and planning by bio-region as well as political boundaries, and urged that Asian and Pacific Governments examine their own capacities for adopting affordable alternatives to current patterns of economic growth. He also conveyed the demand of the non-governmental organization community that they should be included in preparatory process of the 1992 Conference and also that they should be included in the national delegations.

57. The Conference urged UNDP, UNEP, World Bank, ADB, and other international and development organizations to increase their support in the field of environment and development in the Asian and Pacific region.

58. The Conference expressed appreciation of the excellent preparations for the Ministerial-level Conference and the quality of the documents prepared by the secretariat, particularly the "Report on the state of the environment in Asia and the Pacific 1990". Many delegations expressed their willingness to participate in follow-up activities, particularly the preparation of the third report on the state of the environment and the plan of action for the implementation of a regional strategy on environmentally sound and sustainable development.

IV. REPORT OF THE PREPARATORY MEETING OF SENIOR OFFICIALS

(Item 5 of the agenda)

59. The Conference had before it document IHE/MCED/2.

60. In his introductory statement, the Chief of the Division of Industry, Human Settlements and Environment of ESCAP, who had been designated Secretary of the Conference, reported on the main outcome of the Preparatory Meeting of Senior Officials.

61. The Conference generally endorsed sections I to VII, and the recommendations contained therein, of the "Report of the Preparatory Meeting of Senior Officials", which is provided as annex I to the present document.

V. CONSIDERATION OF A MINISTERIAL DECLARATION ON ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

(Item 6 of the agenda)

62. The Conference had before it document IHE/MCED/2, section VIII, "Draft ministerial declaration on environmentally sound and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific".

63. The Conference considered and adopted the Ministerial Declaration on Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, which is provided as annex II to the present document.

VI. OTHER MATTERS

(Item 7 of the agenda)

64. There were no other matters considered by the Conference.

VII. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

(Item 8 of the agenda)

65. The Ministerial-level Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific unanimously adopted the report.

Annex I

REPORT OF THE PREPARATORY MEETING OF SENIOR OFFICIALS

I. ORGANIZATION OF THE SESSION

1. The Preparatory Meeting of Senior Officials at the Ministerial-level Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific was held at Bangkok from 10 to 13 October 1990.

A. Attendance

2. The Meeting was attended by representatives of the following members and associate members of ESCAP: Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, France, India, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Samoa, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Tonga, Tuvalu, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Vanuatu, Viet Nam, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Hong Kong, Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands and Republic of Palau.

3. Representatives of the following countries attended the Meeting as observers: Canada, Chile, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Finland, Israel, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey.

4. The following United Nations bodies, specialized agencies and intergovernmental organizations were represented: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), International Labour Organisation (ILO), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), World Health Organization (WHO), World Bank, United Nations World Meteorological Organization (WMO), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee (AALCC), Asian Development Bank (ADB), Commission of the European Communities (CEC), Committee for Co-ordination of Joint Prospecting for Mineral Resources in Asian Offshore Areas (CCOP), South Asian Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP) and South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP).

5. The following organization was also represented: the Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation.

B. Opening statements

6. The Executive Secretary welcomed the participants and stated that the preparatory meeting was to review the documents and make recommendations for the consideration of the Ministers. The Meeting was informed that in line with the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, the opening day coincided with the International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction. That should be borne in mind during the course of the Meeting, especially in view of the fact that natural disasters in the Asian and Pacific region, especially typhoons, floods and earthquakes, had contributed to the loss of more than 1.2 million lives between 1964 and 1986 and made a billion people homeless, with property losses estimated at $US 18 billion.

7. The Executive Secretary drew the attention of the Meeting to the fact that the documents presented at the current meeting, with the exception of the paper on the regional input to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development to be held in Brazil in 1992, had been considered by the Expert Group Meeting on the Report on the State of the Environment in Asia and the Pacific, held at Bangkok in May 1990 and the ESCAP/UNDP Expert Group Meeting on Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development, held at Jomtien, Thailand in June 1990. Furthermore, he pointed out that the focus of the Meeting would be on the draft regional strategy, which would serve as a framework for the development of regional, subregional and national action programmes for the promotion of environmentally sound and sustainable development. The recommendations outlined in the strategy include 7 priority areas and 35 projects and activities to be undertaken over a decade (1990-2000) with an estimated cost of $US 5 million per year. Additionally, to meet the need for increased regional co-operation through policy formulation and planning at the highest level, the Executive Secretary suggested that regional ministerial-level conferences should be convened regularly, at least once every five years. In that regard, the Meeting was informed that the structure of ESCAP legislative committees was currently under review by a group of eminent persons and that the Commission would review the overall conference structure at its forty-seventh session at Seoul in 1991.

8. For increased co-operation and co-ordination, it was suggested that an inter-agency committee on environment and development be constituted. Furthermore, a regional network of centres of excellence on research,

training, policy research and analysis on environment and development issues was proposed. Consideration should also be given to the establishment of regional specialized disaster mitigation centres and a regional working group on oceanography and marine environment.

9. The Meeting was also expected to consider a draft ministerial declaration, the outline of which was prepared by an open-ended informal working group during the ESCAP/UNDP Expert Group Meeting held at Jomtien, Thailand in June 1990.

10. The Executive Secretary expressed his appreciation to the Governments of Australia, France, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Thailand and the USSR, for their financial and technical support; the financial support, co-sponsorship and co-operation of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme and the Asian Development Bank in convening the Conference were also appreciated.

11. The Deputy Director, Bureau for Programme Policy and Evaluation, UNDP, in his statement informed the Meeting of the formation of a network of 24 UNDP field offices in Asia and the Pacific in response to requests from Governments, in support of sustainable development and the eradication of poverty. Together with UNEP and the World Bank, UNDP would undertake programmes in four areas of priority financed through the global environment facility to be established in 1991 and the interim multilateral fund for the protection of the ozone layer. The four priority areas included protection of the ozone layer; climate change and global warming and the need for reduction of carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions; protection of biodiversity; and clean-up and protection against degradation of international waters.

12. The activities of UNDP in the preparatory process towards the 1992 Conference were also outlined by the Deputy Director. He stated that UNDP was prepared to support individual countries in the preparation of their reports reflecting action-oriented and pragmatic plans to pursue sustainable development, especially by means of addressing the environmental issues contained in General Assembly resolution 44/228. In that regard, the Meeting was informed that a senior UNDP staff member had been seconded to the UNCED secretariat to co-ordinate the preparation of national reports and the regional input. Additionally, UNDP resident representatives had also been designated by the Secretary-General of UNCED as his representatives in the countries to which they were accredited.

13. Outlining the preparatory activities of UNDP for the 1992 Conference, the Deputy Director touched on the "cross-cutting" issues of importance in developing countries, including development of managerial and institutional capability, especially through support of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), NGO coalitions and women's organizations in addressing urban environmental problems; mobilization of environmentally benign technology; financing environmental aspects of development to assist countries in meeting the costs incurred in alleviating global and local environmental problems; and through regional and international institutional arrangements for assessing global environmental issues. These issues would serve as the focus for UNDP in collaborating with Governments in formulating the fifth cycle country programme and the establishment of the sustainable development network.

C. Inaugural address

14. The inaugural address was delivered by H.E. Mr. Prachuab Chaiyasan, Minister of Science, Technology and Energy, who extended a warm welcome to the senior officials and expressed confidence that the Meeting would generate important ideas and recommendations towards improving the integration of environment policies with development objectives. The Minister emphasized that the deliberations were timely and that the Government of Thailand welcomed the opportunity to host and participate in the conference activities. He recalled that environmental preservation and its relationship to development had become a priority only recently in Thailand and that that was currently being translated into government policies and actions.

15. He informed the Meeting that the Thai Government currently took environmental considerations into account in its development planning and promoted development projects which were environmentally sound, such as upper watershed reforestation and erosion control and control of discharges of liquid, solid and gaseous wastes into the environment.

D. Election of officers

16. Dr. Sanga Sabhasri (Thailand) was elected Chairman of the Preparatory Meeting of Senior Officials; Mr. Pervez Ahmad Butt (Pakistan); and Mr. Abu Bakar Jaafar (Malaysia) were elected Vice-Chairmen; and Mr. Barney Rongap (Papua New Guinea) was elected Rapporteur.

E. Adoption of the agenda

17. The Meeting adopted the following agenda, as contained in document IHE/PMSO/L.1:

1. Opening of the Meeting.
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda.
4. Review of the state of the environment in Asia and the Pacific.
5. Review of the status of implementation of the recommendations of the World Commission on Environment and Development and identification of further measures to be taken in respect of the Asian and Pacific region.
6. Global environmental problems of the depletion of the ozone layer, climatic change and the rise in sea level: their implications in the context of the Asian and Pacific region.
7. Regional co-operation in the field of environment and development:
   (a) Role of Governments, non-governmental organizations, intergovernmental organizations and United Nations bodies and agencies;
   (b) Feasibility of establishment of a regional environment centre for Asia and the Pacific;
   (c) Warning system against disasters and coastal area resource development and management.
8. Regional strategy on environmentally sound and sustainable development.
9. Regional input to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development 1992.
10. Other matters.
11. Adoption of the report.

18. The Meeting considered the order in which agenda items were to be considered and in the light of the relative importance of agenda items 8 and 9, it was agreed to advance their consideration to follow item 4.

19. The Meeting agreed to form an informal working group on the draft ministerial declaration. Mr. Pervez Ahmad Butt, one of the Vice-Chairmen, was requested to chair the meeting of the informal working group.

II. REVIEW OF THE STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

(Item 4 of the agenda)

20. The Meeting had before it documents IHE/PMSO/1, "State of the environment in Asia and the Pacific: executive summary" and IHE/PMSO/1/Corr.1, and the recently published publication, State of the Environment in Asia and the Pacific 1990.

21. In his introductory statement, the Chief of the Division of Industry, Human Settlements and Environment, ESCAP, who was designated Secretary of the Conference, stated that in 1987, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific had directed the secretariat to prepare the second report on the state of the environment for the purpose of establishing a better conceptual link between economic development and environmental quality.

22. The first part of the report described the prevailing environmental conditions in the region from the perspective of natural and human ecosystems. The second part presented the national and regional responses to the problems, while the third and final part described the context within which environmental policy decisions had to be made. The state of the regional environment would be summarized succinctly as follows: the biophysical conditions had, with few exceptions, deteriorated but the socio-political setting had become more receptive to new and bold initiatives. The report identified three critical environmental problems: land degradation and depletion of natural resources, unsustainable environment in rural and urban settlements, and the pollution of air and water. Paradoxically, the region's environmental problems were caused simultaneously by both rapid economic development and lack of development. While the report could not claim to cover all the detailed aspects of the environment in a region characterized by diversity, dynamism and change, it presented a sufficiently clear picture of the emerging mosaic of national and regional environmental conditions.

23. The Meeting commended the secretariat on preparing a comprehensive report and noted that indeed the great diversity of the region made the effort difficult. The Meeting recognized that the report would serve as reference material and a basic document in reviewing the environmental situation in the region which would be useful in promoting environmental awareness. The Meeting noted that the secretariat would update the report every five years.

24. A few delegations noted that some data and information quoted in the report did not conform with those from Government sources while some others needed updating. The Chairman requested that such data and information, as well as other corrections, be provided in writing to the secretariat which would take those into consideration when revising the summary and in the subsequent editions of the state of the environment report.

25. Several delegations suggested expanding the coverage of a number of issues: the unsustainable pattern of marine fishing, nuclear testing and the dumping of toxic and hazardous wastes in the Pacific, natural disasters, and subregional perspectives. One delegation underlined that the risk of increasing the rate of radioactivity linked to nuclear testing was a serious one. It was also suggested that the Asian part of the Soviet Union should be covered, that there was need more fully to integrate economic and environmental considerations and to include an assessment of environmental issues in the preparation of subsequent state of the environment reports.

26. It was suggested that, in the future, representatives from as many member countries as possible should take an active part in the preparation of the state of the environment report. It was proposed that the constitution of a drafting committee composed of representatives from member countries be considered to collaborate with the secretariat in that endeavour. The co-operation and support of subregional organizations should also be sought for that purpose. While welcoming the idea, the Meeting noted that for the preparation and issuance of the report, ESCAP bore the primary responsibility.

III. REVIEW OF THE STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE WORLD COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT AND IDENTIFICATION OF FURTHER MEASURES TO BE TAKEN IN RESPECT OF THE ASIAN AND PACIFIC REGION

(Item 5 of the agenda)

27. The Meeting had before it document IHE/PMSO/2.

28. In his introductory statement, the Secretary of the Conference mentioned that the document evaluated the progress achieved in the Asian and Pacific region in raising public concern over environment and development issues, as follow-up to the findings and recommendations of the World Commission on Environment and Development.

29. The secretariat document began with a brief overview of the economic development of the region and its response to the WCED report and also made it clear that much needed to be done to achieve environmentally sound and sustainable development in the region.

30. Several recommendations at the national and regional level were included in the document. The national level recommendations focused on institution building and public awareness raising activities. The recommendations at the regional level addressed poverty alleviation, conservation and protection of coastal areas, pollution control, and promotion of environmentally sound and sustainable development.

31. The Meeting generally endorsed the recommendations at the national level contained in the document: strengthening national environment agencies and placing them at the same level as economic planning agencies; implementing environmental impact assessment (EIA) for all development projects; removing the weaknesses in environmental legislation; monitoring environmental parameters in relation to economic indicators; enhancing training and skills development; initiating the process of natural resource accounting; increasing public awareness and promoting action at the grass-roots level; and preparing action plans for environmentally sound and sustainable development.

32. The Meeting also generally endorsed the thrust of the recommendations at the regional level: to formulate actions to alleviate poverty-related environmental degradation and identify means to rehabilitate natural resources; to develop management plans for coastal areas; to demonstrate the implementation of the polluter-pays-principle; and to implement a regional project to promote environmentally sound and sustainable development at the grassroots level. However, some delegations expressed reservations regarding the proposed establishment of a high-level task force of eminent persons, calling for further elaboration of the proposals before any decision was taken.

33. In addition to strengthening the environment agencies, the Meeting agreed that the establishment of environment sections in other relevant government agencies should be encouraged in order to promote the integration of environment and development objectives.

34. Some delegations pointed out certain inaccuracies in the document and provided additional information in respect of their countries and

organizations relating to the implementation of WCED recommendations. The Chairman requested that those corrections and information be transmitted in writing to the secretariat for appropriate action.

IV. GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS OF THE DEPLETION OF THE OZONE LAYER, CLIMATIC CHANGE AND THE RISE IN SEA LEVEL: THEIR IMPLICATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ASIAN AND PACIFIC REGION

(Item 6 of the agenda)

35. The Meeting had before it documents IHE/PMSO/3 and IHE/PMSO/3/Corr.1.

36. The Secretary of the Conference introduced the document, which suggested that in the medium term, climate change might aggravate the existing environmental problems in the region. In the long term, global warming and ozone layer depletion could have serious implications for agriculture, marine environment and human health, among others. The document discussed possible preventive and adaptive measures available to Governments in the region and contained a set of recommendations for action at national, regional and international levels.

37. Many delegations spoke on the issues of climate change and ozone layer depletion, reiterating the seriousness and urgency of the matter for the Asian and Pacific region, especially in view of the latest results as reflected in the first assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) which had declared imminent climate change a reality (which was not accurately reflected in the secretariat document). A recent sketch of the scale of damage to the ozone layer was provided by the representative of WMO, who informed the meeting that measurements of total ozone in the Antarctic region in September-October 1990, a peak period, indicated a 40 per cent reduction compared with the yearly average.

38. Some delegations drew the attention of the Meeting to the implications of climate change on land ecosystems. Several delegations expressed their serious concern at the impact of sea-level rise on island nations and countries with significant coastlines. It was pointed out that climate change-induced sea level rise might be aggravated by land subsidence in a number of coastal areas in the region. In that respect, the Meeting welcomed the initiative of the Netherlands, in co-operation with Australia, the United States and New Zealand, to examine the possibility of establishing

an international study and training centre to develop and disseminate know-how to limit the negative effects of a rise in sea level.

39. Many delegations expressed their concern that the implications of climate change could greatly exceed the financial and technical capabilities of many developing countries, especially island countries. The changes were expected to affect countries at different stages of development indiscriminately, and urgent additional support to developing countries from industrialized countries would therefore be justified. The Meeting noted with appreciation the willingness of the Netherlands to supplement the contributions of developing countries to global efforts to cope with global environmental problems, including climatic change. In general, it was stressed that technology for the control of greenhouse gas emissions and ozone-friendly technology should be made available to developing countries on favourable terms.

40. The Meeting generally supported the thrust of the recommendations at national, regional and international levels contained in the document and recommended the active participation of all ESCAP members in the IPCC process as well as in the negotiation of a framework convention on climate change. It was stressed that recommended actions needed to accurately address national concerns.

41. Several delegations stressed the importance of protecting the marine environment, in particular the coral reef ecosystems and the polar region's and of transfer of information aimed at disseminating the results of the work of IPCC and at the protection of the ozone layer and noted that subregional organizations could carry out some of the activities proposed at the regional level. At the international level, activities aimed at putting an end to practices which contributed to the intensification of the greenhouse effect should provide acceptable and viable alternatives.

42. The Meeting took note of the proposal of WMO to establish national climate change co-ordination committees, which could carry out country studies into the predicted implications of climate change, and help facilitate the international negotiation process in the coming years.

V. REGIONAL CO-OPERATION IN THE FIELD OF ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (Item 7 of the agenda)

43. The Meeting had before it documents IHE/PMSO/4 and IHE/PMSO/4/Corr.1.

44. In his introductory statement, the Secretary of the Conference stated that a noticeable and substantial gap in regional achievements was the lack of co-ordinated efforts for environmental protection and long-term sustainable development. Therefore an institutional mechanism was proposed to promote co-operation between Governments, non-governmental organizations and regional organizations to obtain the maximum benefits to help achieve environmentally sound and sustainable development. The document highlighted the issues and mechanisms for regional co-operation in the field of environment and development in three main action proposals: intergovernmental co-operation; co-ordination among the United Nations bodies and agencies, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations; and networking of institutions and training centres on environment and development, on warning systems against disasters, and on coastal area resource development and management.

45. The three institutional mechanisms recommended in the secretariat document were: ministerial meetings every five years to monitor the progress in the field of environment and development; an intergovernmental committee of senior officials on environment and development, meeting every two years, replacing the current ESCAP legislative Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment; and an inter-agency committee on environment and development to bring together all the United Nations bodies and agencies, multilateral funding agencies and non-governmental organizations active in the field. The inter-agency committee would co-ordinate activities to avoid any possible duplication and to ensure cost-effectiveness of projects and programmes currently being implemented at the regional level.

46. On the feasibility of a regional centre on environment, it was stated in the document that the idea of establishing networks of national and regional technical and policy research institutes on environment and development was found to be an option supported by a majority of member Governments.

47. Concerning the issue of an early warning system against disasters, a number of measures on operational mitigation programmes such as establishment of disaster mitigation centres, research and technical support, training,

funding and general support were recommended. The document further recommended that regional co-operation and national capabilities in monitoring and research of coastal environments could be enhanced by the establishment of a regional working group of institutes dealing with oceanography and the marine environment.

48. The Meeting noted the proposal that a ministerial-level conference on environment and development should be convened at least once every five years. However, some delegations felt that such an interval might be too long, particularly given the importance of regional action in response to anticipated follow-up recommendations of the 1992 Conference.

49. The Meeting discussed the following proposals for the establishment of regional networks, as suggested in the document:

(a) A network of three types of institutions: existing regional centres, national technical research and training institutions, and national policy research institutes on environment and development. UNDP readiness to provide technical and financial support for the establishment of the Sustainable Development Network would facilitate the task.

(b) Regional specialized disaster mitigation centres, one each for South Asia, South-East Asia, East Asia, and the Pacific, in line with the World Weather Watch regional specialized meteorological centres.

(c) A regional working group of institutes dealing with oceanography and marine environment for joint research/training programmes, and preparation of guidelines for the development of coastal environmental management plans.

The Meeting agreed that ESCAP should play an important role in promoting the formulation and strengthening of regional networks of relevant institutes and centres.

50. The Meeting recommended that a regional study on scientific and technological development aimed at strengthening national efforts in the development and transfer of technologies including environmentally sound ones should be undertaken by ESCAP. It also recommended the consideration of the feasibility of establishing a regional bank of modern technologies, including clean technologies, as well as a regional training centre on technology transfer to be possibly attached to the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology. In that regard, the Meeting welcomed the offer of the delegation of the USSR to contribute to the study and participate in

the activities of the above-mentioned regional bodies. One delegation also recommended that clean technologies should be singled out as a special group of commodities in international trade enjoying special privileges. That would facilitate a decrease of their cost and could become of real assistance in the solution of ecological problems in the region. The Meeting also recommended a system of ecological assistance, an international centre on early detection and warning on approaching cyclones, as well as the preparation of a multilateral convention on the protection of the marine and biological resources of the Pacific.

51. The Meeting took note of projects, ongoing as well as under consideration, to establish centres of environment in the region. In that connection, the initiative of establishing a UNEP centre in Japan for the purpose of transfer of environmentally sound technologies was introduced by Japan and was welcomed.

52. Extensive discussion took place on the proposed intergovernmental committee of senior officials on environment and development. While several delegations supported the idea in principle, others considered that further clarification would be necessary. The Meeting was informed of the existence of intergovernmental committees of senior officials on environment in the Economic Commission for Europe. The secretariat further clarified that the intergovernmental committee of senior officials on environment and development was proposed to provide the necessary intergovernmental guidance to the secretariat in place of the existing Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment of ESCAP. As that matter was currently under consideration by a group of eminent persons constituted by the Commission, the Meeting noted the need to await the result of the ongoing review which would be submitted to the Commission.

53. The Meeting extensively discussed the establishment of an inter-agency committee on environment and development and generally recognized the need for co-ordination efforts in order to utilize scarce resources more efficiently. However, some delegations felt that such a co-ordination mechanism was more effective at the subregional level. The Meeting noted that at the global level, such co-ordination existed through the United Nations inter-agency mechanism of Designated Officials on Environmental Matters, but no such arrangement existed at the regional level.

VI. REGIONAL STRATEGY ON ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

(Item 8 of the agenda)

54. The Meeting had before it documents IHE/PMSO/5 and IHE/PMSO/5/Add.1.

55. In his introductory statement, the Secretary of the Conference stated that the strategy sought to ensure economic development in the ESCAP region with equitable distribution of the benefits of development, rational management of the region's resource base, preservation of the region's biodiversity and protection of the environment.

56. The strategy identified factors such as efficiency, equity, resource husbandry, people's participation, self-reliance and technology as the key elements to sustainable development; advocated short-term curative measures for tackling the most severe environmental problems of the region; suggested medium-term measures oriented towards the eradication of root causes of environmental degradation; and offered recommendations for solving global environmental problems.

57. The strategy recognized that the primary responsibility for identification, formulation and implementation of the bulk of initiatives necessary for achieving environmentally sound and sustainable development should lie at the national level. However, a number of initiatives had been identified at the regional level in the annex to the document to support and facilitate national action plans up to the year 2000. A review and evaluation process had also been included as an integral part of the strategy implementation at both national and regional levels.

58. The Meeting recognized that owing to the great diversity of the countries and areas in the region, national priorities differed. However, there were common issues such as climatic change, biodiversity, technology transfer, and others, which could be identified, and groups of countries shared similar environmental problems and common concerns.

59. The Meeting considered the document entitled "Regional strategy on environmentally sound and sustainable development" as providing a substantial presentation on the concept and broad framework for promoting environmentally sound and sustainable development. While endorsing the concept and main thrust of the strategy, the Meeting considered that there was a need for further elaboration and fine tuning, taking into account, inter alia, the following: (a) special conditions and needs prevailing in the various groups of countries such as the least developed and island developing countries,

newly industrializing economies and developed countries in such a diverse region; (b) the need for additional funding and implementation mechanisms at the regional level to support national efforts; (c) the need for promoting public awareness and interest on sustainable development issues; (d) the need for carefully examining the large number of recommendations put forward in the document; (e) the need for assigning priorities to the environmental issues and developmental driving forces; and (f) the need for delivery mechanisms at the national, regional, and international levels.

60. The Meeting, therefore, expressed the view that there was a need to look at the strategy document in greater detail before it could be finalized. While the concept of a regional strategy was acceptable, some delegations felt that the document was still too general; others felt that it might be too specific and did not reflect the concerns of some countries or groups of countries; that there was a need to relate it more closely to the objectives of the 1992 Conference; that the focus should be on common resources, environmental technology and technology transfer; that the subnational level, for instance, the river basin, might be relevant for more rational rural planning; that the role of local authorities should be strengthened; that the cultural basis appropriate for each country should be taken into account; that the proposed action projects needed further review and should include pilot and demonstration projects; and that unsustainable harvesting of marine resources should be specifically addressed.

61. With respect to funding, several delegations felt that the suggested funding level of $US 5 million per year was much too small for implementation of the comprehensive plan presented in the annex to the document. It was further suggested by some delegations that some of the funds could be channelled through the subregional organizations; that funding support could include contributions in national currency, as well as facilities; and that effective use of existing mechanisms should be explored.

62. As regards programme implementation, some delegations proposed that several projects could be implemented through the existing subregional environmental programmes, and that ESCAP should play an expanded role towards strengthening the capabilities of the programmes.

63. The Meeting also agreed that further measures would be needed to assist the developing countries in the region to prepare national action plans for promoting environmentally sound and sustainable development; assist in setting project priorities; promote human resources development, institution building, and administrative and legal reforms for

environmentally sound and sustainable development; and, in general, to implement the regional strategy for such development.

64. The Meeting, therefore, recommended the convening of a meeting of government-nominated experts to finalize the detailed regional strategy in the Asian and Pacific region. The Meeting welcomed the offer of Japan to provide financial support to the ESCAP secretariat for the convening of that meeting early in 1991.

65. One of the Chairmen of the NGO/Media Symposium on Communication for Environment, which was being held concurrently, delivered a statement at the Meeting on behalf of the Symposium. She stated that the Symposium viewed public participation as indispensable for achieving environmentally sound and sustainable development. It urged that environmental education be incorporated in the curriculum at all levels of schooling and international organizations should make available resources for that purpose; it asked for more consultation and people's participation regarding major development projects, particularly at the planning stage; and it encouraged each country to establish a citizens' code of conduct for the environment which stressed people's stewardship of the environment. An invitation was extended to the Chairman of the Preparatory Meeting to address the Symposium.

VII. REGIONAL INPUT TO THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT 1992

(Item 9 of the agenda)

66. The Meeting had before it document IHE/PMSO/6.

67. In his introductory statement, the Secretary of the Conference mentioned that the current Ministerial Conference could undoubtedly make a substantive contribution to the 1992 Conference, but that it was anticipated that more work would have to be undertaken for the preparation of additional ESCAP regional input. A realistic time frame of activities was presented, with a planned ESCAP regional conference late in April or early in May 1991, in order to have the additional input available in time for the third preparatory meeting for the 1992 Conference, to be held in August 1991.

68. With respect to the substance of the ESCAP regional input, the Secretary asked for guidance from the Meeting on what regional issues on environment and development would remain between the global environmental issues and the issues that would be highlighted in the national reports to be prepared for the 1992 Conference. Special attention was drawn to the need for giving priority to the fields of interaction between the nine

environmental issues mentioned in resolution 44/228 and at least seven developmental driving forces such as population; energy and transport; industrialization; urbanization; agriculture; tourism; international trade and investment. In order to narrow down the primary goals, all member States had been asked to fill in the priority scoring tables included in document IHE/PMSO/6, which also touched on the so-called cross-sectoral issues, such as financial resources; technology transfer; legal aspects; institutions; economic instruments; and supporting measures.

69. The Meeting was requested to comment on the provisional outline for the regional input to the 1992 Conference presented in annex III of document IHE/PMSO/6. In that respect, it was also mentioned that timely preparation of the national reports, as requested by the UNCED secretariat, would be useful in the preparation of documents for the ESCAP regional conference.

70. The Meeting recommended that the timing of the ESCAP regional preparatory meeting should be advanced to February 1991, in order to provide the regional input to the second preparatory meeting for the 1992 Conference which was scheduled to commence on 18 March 1991. In view of the heavy schedule of international environmental meetings, a suggestion was made to hold that preparatory meeting back-to-back with the proposed meeting of government-nominated experts on the further elaboration of the regional strategy and action plan, as discussed under agenda item 8 of the current Meeting.

71. With respect to the prioritization of issues, it was mentioned that that was a difficult task requiring additional efforts on the part of Governments and of the ESCAP secretariat. As it was not possible to have regional priorities, given the great diversity of situations in the ESCAP region, it was proposed to concentrate on a limited number of common issues such as climate change, discharge of wastes, pollution issues and transfer of technology and resources.

72. The Meeting emphasized the necessity of paying more attention to the developmental aspects and especially to their interlinkages with the environmental issues because they observed that that matter had been insufficiently highlighted during the first substantive preparatory meeting of the 1992 Conference, held in August 1990 at Nairobi.

73. The Meeting stressed the importance of the timely preparation of national reports for the Conference preparatory process and expressed their appreciation of the technical assistance offered to them by UNDP, World Bank, ADB and by Japan in that respect.

74. Some delegations expressed their concern that some unique and characteristic input on subregional issues might not be adequately injected into the 1992 Conference preparatory process, and proposed to have subregional inputs prepared. The Meeting was informed that the Pacific island countries would contribute to the 1992 Conference as agreed to by the intergovernmental meeting of SPREP, the details of which were to be elaborated and endorsed by a ministerial meeting to be held in French Polynesia in 1991.

75. The Meeting supported the recommendations made at the Nairobi session of the Preparatory Committee for the 1992 Conference to hold that Conference at the level of heads of State and Government which would undoubtedly raise the efficiency of its recommendations concerning the solution of global ecological problems.

76. The Meeting considered that the widest possible participation of non-governmental organizations in the preparation of the 1992 Conference would have a substantial impact on achieving positive results and invited the Preparatory Committee to work out a method of involving non-governmental organizations in the preparatory process.

77. The Meeting concluded that the ESCAP regional input into the preparatory process should, wherever possible, reflect the national and subregional priorities and hoped that the national contributions for the preparation of regional inputs would be transmitted to the secretariat as soon as possible.

VIII. OTHER MATTERS

(Item 10 of the agenda)

78. The Meeting agreed to recommend the following draft of the ministerial declaration for consideration by the ministers. [The text of the draft has been omitted from this report. The draft was presented to the ministers at the Ministerial-level Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific. The ministers considered the draft and adopted the Ministerial Declaration on Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific on 16 October 1990. The text of the Declaration is presented below as annex II to the Report of the Ministerial-level Conference.]

IX. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

79. The report was unanimously adopted by the Meeting.

Annex II

MINISTERIAL DECLARATION ON ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

1. We, the Ministers of the ESCAP region, representing more than half of the global population, met at Bangkok from 15 to 16 October 1990 at the Ministerial-level Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific;

2. Recalling resolution 267 (XLIV) of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific adopted at Jakarta in 1988 and the United Nations Development Programme Governing Council decision 90/20 adopted at its 38th meeting in 1990;

3. Recalling also the United Nations General Assembly resolution 44/228 on the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, to be held in 1992, and recognizing the importance accorded to regional inputs to that Conference;

4. Deeply concerned about the threat to environmentally sound and sustainable development due to environmental degradation and the depletion of natural resources in the ESCAP region and other adverse conditions, as highlighted in the report on the state of the environment for Asia and the Pacific 1990, such as forest destruction, desertification, watershed degradation, soil erosion, waterlogging and salinization, flooding, destruction of mangroves and corals, loss of biological diversity and pollution of air and water, as well as the ozone layer depletion and the potential rise in the sea level and other expected impacts of climate change associated with the emission of greenhouse gases;

5. Reiterating that poverty, human health, population pressure and environmental degradation are closely interrelated and that environmental protection in the developing countries of the region must, in this context, be viewed as an integral part of the development process and cannot be considered in isolation from it;

6. Affirming that the major cause of the continuing deterioration of the global environment is the unsustainable pattern of production and consumption, particularly in industrialized countries, and that the responsibility for containing, reducing and eliminating environmental damage must be borne by the countries causing such damage and must be in relation

to the damage caused and in accordance with their respective capabilities and responsibilities;

7. Recognizing the urgent need for all countries to intensify efforts to protect and improve the quality of the environment at national, subregional, regional and global levels, wherever relevant, by adopting an approach in which economic growth should be directed towards environmentally sound and sustainable development;

8. Recognizing further that the developing countries have specific concerns and needs which should be given special attention in any global effort for the protection of the environment;

9. Acknowledging the need to address the special environmental problems of small island developing countries of the region;

10. Stressing that the current international economic situation should be improved in order to remove obstacles hampering environmentally sound and sustainable development, particularly in the developing countries, with special attention to the least developed countries of the region;

11. Realizing that the majority of the developing countries in the region lack the necessary financial and other resources and technologies for them to participate effectively in the global and regional efforts for environmental protection;

12. Recognizing further the diverse economic conditions and consequently, the varying technological, financial and other capabilities of the countries in the region, and the opportunities arising therefrom for strengthening regional co-operation to achieve environmentally sound and sustainable development;

13. Reaffirming the objectives in the operative paragraphs 15 (j) and (m) of part I of the United Nations General Assembly resolution 44/228 on the need for new and additional financial resources and on favourable access to, and transfer of, environmentally sound technologies, in particular to the developing countries, for achieving environmentally sound and sustainable development;

We, the Ministers:

14. Commit ourselves to adopt an integrated approach to environment and development, and wherever possible and in accordance with our priorities and capabilities to incorporate environmental considerations into economic planning with a view to effecting the co-ordinated development of our economies and environment;

15. Believe that all economic and social development activities should meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs;

16. Affirm the crucial importance of maintaining the proper balance between economic development, population growth, the rational use of natural resources and environmental protection;

17. Urge countries in the region to adopt effective and sound population policies and accompanying measures for that purpose;

18. Affirm that States have the sovereign right to exploit their own resources pursuant to their social, economic and environmental policies, ensuring that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment of other States or of areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction;

19. Believe that, to achieve sustainable development, policies must be based on the precautionary principle;

20. Affirm the important role of science and technology in economic development, environmental protection, promotion of human health and population planning, especially the popularization and wider use of related science and technologies, in particular in the rural areas in the developing countries, in achieving this goal;

21. Emphasize the need for all countries and relevant international agencies to intensify their co-operation to support and assist the developing countries of the region in such efforts;

22. Welcome and pledge our full support for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development to be held in Brazil in 1992 and call for measures to ensure the full and active participation of ESCAP members and associate members in the preparatory process for the Conference, in particular the developing countries;

23. Recognize that adequate resources will be needed for the implementation of activities agreed to in this Declaration, and urge all donor Governments and agencies to make appropriate voluntary contributions so that actions identified can be implemented;

24. Welcome the important ongoing work of ESCAP on the elaboration of a regional strategy on environmentally sound and sustainable development by taking into consideration existing subregional and national strategies and call for its early completion;

25. Request the ESCAP secretariat to convene meeting(s) of representatives of members and associate members of the Commission before the second meeting of Preparatory Committee of the 1992 Conference to follow up our decisions, particularly to elaborate a regional strategy on environmentally sound and sustainable development and to continue preparation of the regional contribution to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development;

26. Request also the Executive Secretary of ESCAP, in consultation with representatives from the relevant United Nations agencies and bodies, multilateral funding organizations and Governments to find ways and means to enhance the effectiveness of co-operation and co-ordination in the development and implementation of regional environment and development activities as envisaged by this Declaration;

27. Affirm the right of individuals and non-governmental organizations to be informed of environmental problems relevant to them, to have the necessary access to information, and to participate in the formulation and implementation of decisions likely to affect their environment;

28. Recommend the strengthening of the environment related activities of non-governmental organizations, the promotion of public awareness and people's participation in environmental protection and management activities and in this context welcome all United Nations initiatives which seek to assist media, non-governmental organization and community groups targeting the poor;

29. Reaffirm the necessity to promote environmental education, especially of the younger generations, as well as other measures to increase awareness of the value of the environment;

30. Welcome and encourage the efforts to establish research, training, policy and other institutes/centres dealing with environment and development

activities, with a view to promoting exchange of information, technical assistance and regional co-operation for activities relevant to environmentally sound and sustainable development, and agree that ESCAP should play an important role in promoting the formulation of a regional network of such institutes/centres;

31. Welcome the participation of the Asia-Pacific UNDP regional resident representatives at this Conference which will enable them better to assist in the effective follow-up activities;

32. Further request the Executive Secretary of ESCAP to keep the progress of implementation of this Declaration under review and report to the annual sessions of the Commission.

Annex III

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Symbol	Title
IHE/MCED/L.1	Provisional agenda
IHE/MCED/L.2	Annotated provisional agenda
IHE/MCED/1	Policy statement of the Executive Secretary of ESCAP
IHE/MCED/2	Report of the Preparatory Meeting of Senior Officials

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IHE/MCED/CR.1	Report of the NGO/Media Symposium on Communication for Environment

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